

On the Critical Approach of the Magazine “Molla Nasreddin”

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Abstract

“Molla Nasreddin” was a critical periodical, which was first published in 1906. The magazine was edited by the famous intellectual Azerbaijani writer Jalil Mammadguluzadeh. The magazine was published in three different cities and periods: First in Tbilisi between 1906 and 1917; in Tabriz only in 1921; and lastly in Baku between 1922 and 1931. “Molla Nasreddin”, consisting of critical writings and illustrations managed to reach the large masses, not only in Tbilisi and Azerbaijan, but also all around the Caucasia and Muslims world. “Molla Nasreddin” was extraordinary influential with its severe critical writings and illustrations such as discussions, satiric poems, telegrams, stories, feuilletons, anecdotes, cartoons and caricatures. So “Molla Nasreddin” was the first revolutionary magazine in the press history of Azerbaijan. Hence it also became one of the most important magazines of Turkish press history. The name “Molla Nasreddin” was inspired by Nasreddin Hodja known as the humoristic and wise character of Anatolia in 13th century. So the magazine likewise criticized things with an acerbic sense of humour. It especially criticized the religious hypocrisy and the obscurant movements in the society. The magazine, which satirized the authoritarian governments and leaders in the near east, was also opposed to the colonial policies of the western countries. The magazine “Molla Nasreddin”, which supported rationalization in social and politic problems, often attracted people’s attention to the difference between Azerbaijani society and western societies. In this article, it will be evaluated the critical attitude that “Molla Nasreddin” maintained. In this regard it will be examined, in its three terms, how subjects were handled with illustrations and satiric writings like poems or narratives. As a conclusion it will be revealed how the authors managed to satirize things and in what aspects the manner of “Molla Nasreddin” remained as an important magazine for Azerbaijani literature.

Keywords: Azerbaijani Literature, Molla Nasreddin, Magazine

Introduction

Innovation movements in Azerbaijan were shaped by the way of Russia in the second half of 19th century. In this period Azerbaijani writers started to write their literary works like short stories and novels in realistic style, unlike the traditional forms. They also gave the first examples of the modern theatre plays in this century. One of the most important works in this period was press. Press studies, which their first examples were seen at the beginning of the 19th century, started to take shape gradually in the second half of the century. So writers and intellectuals, during the innovation moments, took the press studies serious in terms of the enlightenment movement in Azerbaijan.

In the period of westernization, same periodical studies were carried out in Turkey. Some newspapers published like Takvim-i Vekayi, Tercuman-ı Ahval, Tasvir-i Efkâr. Namik Kemal and Ibrahim Shinasi were ones who especially took the enlightenment movement in Tanzimat reform era very serious. They published various newspapers and periodicals in those years. As it was seen in Ottoman Empire, democratic ideals and freedom thoughts also started to spread among some Azerbaijani scholars and writers like Abbasgulu Aga Bakikhanov, Ismail Bey Kutkashinli, Mirza Shefi Vazeh, Hasan Bey Zerdabi and Mirza Fatali Akhundov. In those years it was possible to see some interactions between Azerbaijani and Ottoman intellectuals since both started their modernization movements in the same period. These scholars were very important for the modernization of Azerbaijan.

Mirza Fatali Akhundov was one of the most prominent master minds in many aspects of the modernization movement in Azerbaijan. Today Akhundov who is accepted as one of the founders of modern Azerbaijani literature is also known as an “author, play writer, philosopher, and founder of modern literary criticism, who acquired fame primarily as the writer of European-inspired plays in the Azeri Turkish language” (Millar, 2004, p.23). Akhundov was important for the modern literary criticism in Iran and by some academic circles; the modern literary criticism was introduced by his work “Qiritikah” into Iran (Parsinejad, 2003, p.39). So Akhundov was a great reformist not only in Caucasian region but also in the Eastern world.

In order to understand the new developments and the realistic literature of modern Azerbaijan properly, it is necessary to know who Akhundov was and what he did at the turn of the 20th century. Because his revolutionary ideas influenced many successor writers in modern Azerbaijani literature.

Akhundov was a thinker who didn't care about a specific nation concept for Muslims. He regarded all Muslims as a whole community. For example an Iranian, an Azeri or an Ottoman Turkish didn't have big differences from each other (Akpınar, 1994, p.54). So he wrote both Azerbaijani Turkish, which was his mother tongue and Persian, which was the common literary language used in the Muslim world of his time. And he sometimes wrote Russian too. Yet it is known he paid attention to Azerbaijani language to be used in literary works. For example Akhundov wrote a letter to Hasan Bey Zerdabi, in which he said he was quite content that people (Zerdabi's students) in Baku performed his play “Haci Qara” in their own language (Baykara, 1966, p.153). But he couldn't publish his theater plays in Turkish before 1859, because of Russian censorship (Akpınar, 1994, p.53). It should be pointed out that Azerbaijani Turkish which Akhundov used in his works was very simple and close to spoken language so that people could understand easily. Because Akhundov believed that a literary work, explicitly or implicitly, had to have an idea and there could barely be a literary work without any idea. So according to him the role of art was to present and describe the reality.

Akhundov was a strong advocate of innovation for the traditional Eastern people. Though Akhundov was different from Ismail Bey Gasprinski in terms of the ideology of nationalism, both of them who lived and were educated in the Russian Empire had an impact on the modernization or westernization process of Turkish World. Ronald Grigor said that “*The Crimean Tatar Ismail Bey Gasprinski and the Azerbaijani writer Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzade inspired Turkish intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.*” (Sunny, 1993, p.25).

One of the most important revolutionary aspects of Akhundov was that he advocated the latinisation for Turkish languages. He was actually considered the first one who suggested the revision of Arabic alphabet and then subsequently suggested to change the Arabic alphabet to the Latin alphabet. In 1863 Akhundov went to Istanbul from Tbilisi and met grand vizier Fuad Pasha (Baykara, 1966, p.154). Akhundov who submitted his proposal of latinisation also gave Fuad Pasha a book, called “Cemiyeti Ilmiye-i Osmaniye”. However his efforts for latinisation gave no result. His project was rejected. And he returned with an order of Medjidie. And he sent a letter to his friend Jalaluddin Mirza in 1870, in which he wrote these lines:

*The Turkish and Iranian noblemen
All were asleep like Chinese people¹*

Akhundov was a secular writer who always criticized any kind of religious belief. He said “*The mistake that we have made in picking out the truth from the superstition and distinguishing the straight one from the crooked one is that we have always regarded two different and incompatible propositions as one proposition by mixing together, which are, in fact, different things. One of them is science whereas the other is belief.*” (Baykara, 1966, p.158). So Akhundov actually disagreed not only with the doctrines of Islam, and also with the doctrines of any other religions, all of which he regarded as myth. In his “Kamalud- Dövle Letters”, he questioned Islam in many ways. Akhundov said “*The nature is there with its own rules, without any need of supernatural power*” (Qasımzadə, 1962, p.269). He was clear on his opinions about the existence of the World: “*...this is both the*

¹ بزرگان ترکان و ایرانزمین
همه خفته بودند چون خلق چین (<http://do-lc.blogspot.com/2016/09/15-1870.html>)

beginning and the end, that's all..." (Qasimzadə, 1962, p.270). When viewed from this aspect this reminds the famous word of Bertrand Russell: *"I should say that the universe is just there, and that's all."*

Akhundov appreciated the rationalism of the western world, but he didn't support westernization without questioning. Akhundov, who was opposed to the eastern scholastic thought and fallacious traditions, had always been an advocate of equality of woman and supported their rights in society. And his stance on these matters, can be said that, was appreciated by some critical minds like Jalil Mammadguluzadeh. In that regard it would be accurate to say that some contemporary writers like Jalil Mammadguluzadeh regarded Akhundov as a mentor. That is why on the centennial of Akhundov's birth date, the magazine dedicated the cover picture to the memory of Akhundov, in 1911. In the same issue of "Molla Nasreddin", a caricature was drawn, in which on one side there was Akhundov's grave brought down in ruins and on the other side there was a seyyed's grave protected. The caricature depicted the reaction of the people to their memories and moral heritage. This commemorative cover of the magazine and some drawings in it, clearly showed the attitudes of Jalil Mammadguluzadeh and other writers. Of course Jalil Mammadguluzadeh also appreciated some important writers like Ali Bey Huseynzadeh who was one of the most prominent thinkers in the late history of Azerbaijan and Turkish. Though they were different in terms of their perspective on life and literature, Ali Bey Huseynzadeh supported Jalil Mammadguluzadeh as he paid particular attention on Azerbaijani Turkish. It is known that Ali Bey explained his opinions about "Molla Nasreddin" and said him: *"You write well."*

In order to understand the aim of "Molla Nasreddin" properly, it is important to understand its editor and prominent writers. The magazine was founded by Jalil Mammadguluzadeh in Tbilisi in 1906. Within the foundation phase of the magazine, Omar Faig Nemanzadeh was another writer who had a very important position. Shortly afterwards, the magazine which chose up Mirza Alakbar Sabir, Abdurrahim Bey Hagverdiyev, Mammad Said Ordubadi, Aligulu Gamgusar, Ali Nazmi and Selman Mumtaz continued in a realistic style.

It can be mentioned three periods for the magazine: In the first period, the magazine came out between 1906 and 1917 in Tbilisi; in the second period, it was published only a year in 1921 in Tabriz; and in the last period, it was prepared and published between 1922 and 1931, in Baku. It is known that 370 issues in Tbilisi, 8 issues in Tabriz and 390 issues in Baku were pressed (Askerova, 2006, p.210). In the last period of "Molla Nasreddin", Jalil Mammadguluzadeh had difficult times and was subjected to false accusations by the strict communist regime. Jalil Mammadguluzadeh, who was accused of not being realistic enough between 1928 and 1929, was very sorry when his magazine was named as "Allahsız" by the regime. The writer who felt under a lot of pressure decided to leave the magazine in 1931. Consequently under an oppressive regime, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh who had also health problems, had to leave "Molla Nasreddin" permanently.

As stated previously Jalil Mammadguluzadeh appreciated Akhundov and regarded him as a mentor concerning some social and political matters. For instance, on the occasion of Akhundov's 50th death anniversary Jalil Mammadguluzadeh examined Akhundov's opinions about women in his article that he wrote in "Eastern Women" (شرق قادینى/ Şərq Qadını) in 1928. After he described the woman types in the works of Mirza Fatali, He said: *"We see that none of those women were deprived of the innate ability and beauty: peace, daring, bravery, endurance - they have all. But the only enemy they have: that is lack of science and education. Mirza Fatali means by extracting them from the dark curtains to the daylight: Look, these brave and beautiful women are vulgar and ignorant now. I see you abstain to provide them education, because you know these intelligent and persevering women will get their own freedom by the way of education in the future revolution and you will not be able to carry on your domination and debauchery any more"* (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, V.4, p.274). Jalil Mammadguluzadeh also wrote an article under the title of "Mirza Fatali Akhundov, On Religion", in the same magazine and year. In this article, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh discussed Akhundov's opinions about religions and quoted some of his words from "Kemal'ud Dovle": *"Hey, Celal'ud Dovle, do not infer from what I said that I prefer another religion or sect to Islam. I regard all religions as nonsense and a kind of myth."* (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, p.279). Jalil Mammadguluzadeh also examined the secular opinions of Akhundov, who suggested people to get pleasure out of life. About this subject, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh quoted from Akhundov, who actually seemed to quote from Omar Khayyam:

باز آمدنت نیست چو رفتی رفتی (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, p.280)

It is crucial to state that Jalil Mammadguluzadeh and his prominent writers like Mirza Alakbar Sabir and Omar Faig Nemanzadeh had a similar tendency about secularism. And they tried to criticize every kind of fanaticism. It can also be argued if they were right or wrong about the contents and styles of their criticism. But they didn't even avoid criticizing themselves. The crucial point of the criticism of "Molla Nasreddin" was humour. From this aspect, "Molla Nasreddin" was the first magazine in the history of Azerbaijan. Of course it is possible to see some other satiric magazines published in (Muslim) Turkish world. The first of them was "Diyojen" (1870-1873); and the other was "Chaylak" (1873) which were also humoristic magazines published before "Molla Nasreddin" in Ottoman Empire, in the later nineteenth century. These magazines had some similarities in terms of criticizing in a humoristic way, being published in a Muslim society and being suppressed by the power. It is known that "Diyojen" and "Molla Nasreddin" were forced to shut their doors temporarily by Abdul Hamid II. For instance "Diyojen" was punished because of its criticism in its caricature in 123rd issue in 1872 (Özdiş, 2010, p.88). And "Molla Nasreddin" was also temporarily punished because they criticized Abdul Hamid II in 21st issue, in 1907 (Yıldırım, 2015, p.660). So they both stated what they found wrong in political issues. But they had some differences too. For instance, Diyojen had neither a dominant Islamic ideology nor attacked religious fanaticism as much as "Molla Nasreddin" did. Diyojen, like The Young Ottomans, had rather an opposing view against the political and social orders in the Ottoman Empire. It can be said that "Diyojen" faced the dilemma of its modernization period, in which on one hand they tried to keep the tradition, on the other hand they felt they had to leave the parts of the tradition which wasn't compatible with the time. (Özdiş, 2010, p.111). It was inevitable for a dualism age. So it is also possible to see similar dilemmas in "Molla Nasreddin" within the period of modernization. That is why it may be thought that the modernization in "Molla Nasreddin" was entirely westernization.

It is clear that Jalil Mammadguluzadeh and the other prominent writers didn't care about what people had to believe or not. They primarily cared about what prevented the social progress in Azerbaijani (Muslim) community. They tried to raise the awareness of public by using an acerbic sense of humor. Consequently they criticized not only religious fanaticism or irrational manners arising out of it, but also they decried despotism, colonialism, bribery and corruption and drew the attention to educational reforms, language, equality of woman and man. But it should be stated that they commonly teased the Muslim clergies in the society.

Because of the critical and anticlerical illustrations and writings which they published in the magazine, it is known that they were harassed and attacked by the incensed protestors. But the magazine "Diyojen" faced with the same situation too. For instance an imam who didn't like news published about himself busted into the magazine. (Özdiş, 2010, p.90).

The Sense of Criticism of "Molla Nasreddin"

In his memoirs, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh explained what drew him to found the Magazine "Molla Nasreddin". He complained about his own Muslim society because of their unawareness, when Tsar Nicholas II issued the manifesto of October 17th, 1905, which granted people freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of association. And that he also saw a magazine written in Russian called "Kukureku" in which Tsar Nicholas II was illustrated as a rooster, made him start thinking about freedom of press and expression. Jalil Mammadguluzadeh felt very disturbed when their people didn't do anything following these developments. All these developments prompted Jalil Mammadguluzadeh to form such a magazine as "Molla Nasreddin". Jalil Mammadguluzadeh wrote in his memoirs that: *"The reason I was interested in this illustration was that I saw genius writers were free. So it meant that could be possible to illustrate the ruler of the century as a rooster... So why should we wait and miss the opportunity? Set the Ruler Nicholas aside for an hour, why shall we not discomfort our own rulers? Don't we have our own 'Nicholas'?.. Are the countless princes, khans, sultans, rulers and officers better than Nicholas? I set them aside too, then how about turbaned insects? Until when will they bleed the Muslim community dry with the promise of heaven?..."* (Məmmədquluzadə, 2015, p.98). So Jalil Mammadguluzadeh decided to published "Molla Nasreddin" in order to criticize those people who exploited their society. "Molla Nasreddin"s humoristic style was also shaped in that period of time. Jalil Mammadguluzadeh thought that "Molla Nasreddin" came into being by itself, as a natural consequence in order to reflect the history of amusing bogymen and describe their manners and circumstances.

Jalil Mammadguluzadeh started to work with famous painters and illustrators. One of them was Oskar Schmerling, a German illustrator who first drew the wise sufi character “Molla Nasreddin” in the first issue. He worked between 1906 and 1917 for the magazine. The other one was Joseph Rotter (Юсиф Роттер), a German origin illustrator who worked for the magazine between 1906 and 1914. He drew the picture of Akhundov on the commemorative issue, in 1912.

Because Rotter couldn't speak Russian well, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh showed him the types of people mostly lived in Muslim street “Sheytanbazaar”. And he suggested Rotter that he could take them as a model (Anar, 2008, p.243). And the other illustrator, who started to work for the magazine, was Azim Azimzadeh. He worked as the chief of illustrator after 1917. Jalil Mammadguluzadeh also enabled them to have their words in the magazine.

As stated previously “Molla Nasreddin” dealt with a lot of social and political problems. It mainly aimed to reach the common people who were actually barely literate. So illustrations were very important, as much as the ironical and sarcastic manners of the writers were in the magazine.

First of all, the critical approach of “Molla Nasreddin” mostly depends on satire, which means “a way of criticizing people or ideas in a humorous way, especially in order to make a political point, or a piece of writing that uses this style”.² Or it can be defined as “a way of criticizing something such as a group of people or a system, in which you deliberately make them seem funny so that people will see their faults.” (Longman, 2005, P.1456). As it is understood from the definition, “Molla Nasreddin” is a satiric magazine. By doing so, writers and artists generally benefited from humour, which was essential to them. But they sometimes directly criticized without any humour:

*You are the poor one, who were fooled by the community
See the aftermath, what is your wealth and property?
You threw away each taste and blessing of this life*
Who knows who is your houri or gilman** in the afterlife?
Never mind whether everybody is sick, just consult a magician brother.
Beyond this, you have any other words or cure?
You say, no, let them completely ruin
No one knows in truth, what kind of charity will you have by doing so³*

It is also possible to see some critical stories and articles, which directly criticized. “Molla Nasreddin” was a periodical including literary genres like literary criticism, short stories, poetry, letters, memories, essays, riddles, biographies, and tales. In addition to them, they frequently drew some critical illustrations that were relevant to the matters.

Ironical criticisms in the magazine can be also seen as a touch of sarcasm. Here the basic meaning of “irony” has been taken as “the use of words that are the opposite of what you mean, as a way of being funny.”⁴ “Sarcasm” has been taken as “the use of remarks that clearly mean the opposite of what they say, made in order to hurt someone's feelings or to criticize something in a humorous way”.⁵ In sarcasm, there is an approval in statements, but disagreement or disapproval under the utterance. So the writers (and illustrators) generally targeted at irrational traditional taboo moralities in the society. However even though they obviously targeted at the manners of the bigoted people who were very strict and determined to compel the others to a compulsory

² <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/satire>

³ *Binəvə sənəni ki, aldandın camaat qeydina,*

Axırı bir gör nə oldun, malü samanın nədir?

Tulladın dünyada hər bir ləzzəti, nemətləri,

Axırətdə kim bilir huri və qılmanın nədir?

Baxma millət xəstədir, cindarə ümmid et, dadaş.

Bundan özgə ta söziün nə, özgə dərmanın nədir?

Sən deyirsən qoymaram millət təməməni məhv ola,

Valla heç bir kəs də bilməz boylə əhsanın nədir? (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, V.I, p.626)

⁴ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/irony>

⁵ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sarcasm>

sociology, they got severe reactions, since they sometimes used Islamic terminology, like “Muslim”, “houri”, “Quran”, “mosque” so on. Besides that they gave the modern, rational and contemporary examples from the western or Russian world caused them to be criticized. But it should be pointed out that they also criticized Azerbaijani people who tried to imitate them. For instance M. A. Sabir’s poem “*Compliment*” (*fəxrıyyə*), in which he said “*we feel honored with Russification*” in an ironical style, can be cited as an example for that (Erol, 2013, p.75). So it can be clearly said that neither they asserted any arguments arising from any kind of religious belief nor they were especially engaged in criticism of religious doctrine.

Mirza Alakbar Sabir, who was regarded as a wordsmith in the magazine had a talent for writing satirical verses. So in the magazine, the best examples of the ironical approaches can be seen in his poetry. For instance,

*No matter how the community is pillaged, so what?
No matter how it begs for the enemy, so what?
Just let me eat my fill, what benefits shall I get with others
Let the whole World starve, so what?
Be quite! Sleeping ones will wake up.
I am not willing to awaken the sleeping ones,
If, they, one by one wake, god help me,
Let me be in peace, let the rest of the whole world sink!*⁶

In this poem, Sabir ironically criticized the egocentric people focusing only on their needs. Here he had diametrically opposite points of view about what he actually meant. It is possible to see this style in Sabir’s poetry. He generally satirized people by putting himself in their place. And he approached things from the viewpoint, which was the opposite of his own. One other example from his poetry

*Whatever you give, just give; but never give even a little alms,
Let the poor peasants starve.
Whatever you give, give wholly; but never pay off your debts
Whatever you take, take, it is strength, but never take a salute from paupers*⁷

shows that satirizing things from the opposite point of view helped him to be perhaps more effective. According to John Morreall, three basic theories of laughter can be mentioned: The superiority theory, the incongruity theory and the relief theory (Morreall, 1983, p.38). Though he said it could be possible to examine many other theories such as Bergson’s, he dwelt on these three theories and stated that the superiority theory was probably the most common one. When it comes to “Molla Nasreddin”, it would be more accurate to say the incongruity theory is dominant. Unlike the superiority theory based upon the emotional or feeling side of laughter, the incongruity theory is based upon the cognitive or thinking side. Morreall says that “*While amusement for the superiority theory is primarily effective – it is self-glory or the feeling of triumph – for the incongruity theory amusement is an intellectual reaction to something that is unexpected, illogical or inappropriate in some other way.*” And according to him the basic idea behind the incongruity theory is very general and simple. He says: “*We live in an olderly World, where we have come to expect certain patterns among things, their properties, events, etc. We laugh when we experience something that doesn’t fit into these patterns. As Pascal put it, ‘Nothing produces laughter more than a surprising disproportion between that which one expects and that which*

⁶ *Millət necə tarac olur olsun, nə işim var?!
Düşmənlərə möhtac olur olsun, nə işim var?!
Qoy mən tox olum, özgələr ilə nədi karım,
Dünyavü cahan ac olur olsun, nə işim var?!*

*Səs salma, yatanlar ayılar, qoy hələ yatsın,
Yatmışları razi deyiləm kimsə oyatsın,
Tək-tək ayılan varsa da, həq dadıma çatsın,
Mən salim olum, cümlə cahan batsa da batsın, (Sabir, 2004, p.39)*

⁷ *Hər nə versən, ver, məbada vermə bir dirhəm zəkat,
Qoy acından ölsə ölsün binəvə kəndli və tat.
Hər nə düz versən, ver, oğlum, borcunu vermə tamam,
Hər nə alsan, al, amandır, alma kasıbdan səlam. (Sabir, 2004, p.79)*

one sees.' ” (Morreall, 1983, p.16). Morreall thinks that there are two ways in which laughter stimuli may involve incongruity: One is “incongruity in things”, which depends on some object or situation, and the other is “incongruity in presentation” which depends on the way a person presents a situation. According to Morreall’s examinations and exemplifications, it can be said that both of them can be seen in “Molla Nasreddin”. For instance, M. A. Sabir’s style was very characteristic in “Molla Nasreddin”. As stated previously Sabir used his critical pen in an attempt to jolt the community conscience:

*Why would the wealthy one squander his own wealth?
Feed the almsmen of the city, and put the notables behind?
God take your shame and embarrassment off your face!
Let go of us, begone, you ugly beggar!
Get out of my door, don't cry like a baby, beggar!*⁸

So this poem seems to be a humour of incongruity (in presentation). Because according to Morreall, “*perhaps the most important thing to note about incongruity is that a thing or event is not incongruous simpliciter, but only relative to someone’s conceptual scheme. Incongruity is a violation of a pattern in someone’s picture of how things should be. What any individual finds incongruous will depend on what his experience has been and what his expectations are. If an intelligent being from another galaxy visited Earth and were confronted with a situation which we consider funny (incongruous), he would not find it incongruous unless he had had experience with similar situations before and so had some expectations for what situations of this type are supposed to be like.*” (Morreall, 1983, p.61). So having looked at the moralities that were accepted by Azerbaijani people (and other Muslim communities), it is clearly seen that they were opposed to slavery, they believed in helping paupers, aiding poor ones, being sensitive to poverty and they put emphasis on sharing. And Sabir wrote against to general expectations.

We see that this violation of pattern in expectations of people, in Sabir’s poetry, can sometimes become a sarcastic style. For instance in his parallel poem “*Our goal and conception are the destruction of the homeland*” (*Amalımız, əfkarımız ifnayı-vətəndir*), which he inspired from the Namik Kemal’s poem starting with “*Our goal and conception are the prosperity of the homeland*” (*Âmâlimiz efkârımız ikbâl-i vatandır*), he wished the opposite of what he said, so criticized his own people in a way that is amusing to readers. But it is very likely to be annoying for the people criticized:

*Our goal and conception are the destruction of the homeland,
Grudge, hatred and wrath is our guide,
Our job is no action, but all talk,
We take pleasure in capturing, in the world,
We are Caucasians; we waylay and become famous.*
...
*Europeans make their community prosperous, so be it,
Make their glorious tribe prosperous, so be it,
Make the name of humanity everlasting in the world, so be it,
We are in the sleep of ignorance, become famous by tarnishing names,
We take pleasure in punching in heads*⁹

⁸ Dövlətli nəçin sərf edib öz bəzlü səxasın,
Ə'yamı qoyub, doydura şəhrin fükərasın?
Töksün görüm Allah üzünün şərmü həyasın!
Əl çək yaxamızdan, itil, idbar dilənçi!
Rədd ol qapıdan, ağlama zar-zar, dilənçi! (Sabir, 2004, p.264)

⁹ Amalımız, əfkarımız ifnayı-vətəndir,
Kinü qərəzü hirs bizə rahi-bədəndir,
Əfal yox, ancaq işimiz lafi-dəhəndir,
Dünyadə əsarətlə bütün kam alırıq biz,
Qafqazlılarız, yol kəsiriz, nam alırıq biz.
Avropalı öz millətin ihya edir, etsin,
Şənü şərəfi-qövmünü ihya edir, etsin,

In this poem, it is obvious that their goal and conception are not to ruin or devastate their homeland. And it is also obvious that his primary purpose wasn't to insult his own people. But he criticized his own community's situation by his sarcastic style. One other thing that makes these lines funny was that Sabir used Namik Kemal's verses by changing them on purpose. Because this parallel poem is also like a mistranslation, which Morreall finds more humorous when they yield a new meaning that is somehow opposed to the original. (Morreall, 1983, 72)

We can give another similar example written about pro-innovation schools called "Usul-i Cedid". Sabir disguised himself as the bigoted one who decried the teachers in these schools:

*He supposes the flat earth is round
Besides he says it revolves once a day
The moon revolves; the sky stands still, the sun glows,
Look at the heretic, how impious he is!
Let's escape, son; this's entirely defiled¹⁰*

Of course it is a known fact that the world is round, and it revolves around every day, but his intention with this, was to attack to bigoted people who labeled teachers as heretics who tried to teach common scientific facts in "Usul-i Cedid" schools, in those years. Sabir also wrote some poems like "To children", "The Father advice", "A child" in a similar style.

When incongruity is divided into two as "incongruity in things" and "incongruity in presentation", some examples from "incongruity in things" can also be given in "Molla Nasreddin". "Molla Nasreddin", in its humoristic criticism, generally focused on the ignorance in the society. To Morreall what often makes people laugh, is some deficiency in things or people, which renders them inferior. He thinks: "*The humorous deficiencies of persons are more numerous than the deficiencies of things, and can be divided roughly into four categories: physical deformity, ignorance or stupidity, moral shortcomings, and actions that fail.*" (Morreall, 1983, 64). Probably one of the most common deficiencies in "Molla Nasreddin" is "ignorance and stupidity"; and the other is "moral shortcomings". Jalil Mammadguluzadeh, in his memoirs, wrote that the ironic situations that people made funny because of their "ignorance" were some of the reasons which drew him to publish the magazine (Məmmədquluzadə, 2015, p.101). And Omar Faig Nemanzadeh, in his writing under the title of "*News That Should Be Known*" (*Bilməli Xəbərlər*) in the first issue, asked the readers nine questions, and he teased superstitious and ignorant people with the questions like "*If a Sunnite drinks water out of a bowl, can a Shiite also drink out of the same bowl, or not?*" or "*Where can we find an education book, with which we can educate Muslim children in Turkish language?*" (Nemanzadə, 2006, 255) and so forth. On the other hand, as someone who went to Meshed, Nishapur, Sabzevar, Hamadan, Khorasan, Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara ve Ashgabat, M. A. Sabir conveyed his impressions thanks to his talent in poetry (Erol, 2013, p.75). The lines from the poem "*Young and Old*" below are comprised of a conversation between a narrow minded old man and a young man. It seems that old man cannot even sometimes stand the questions:

- *Do the citizens in your land read the newspapers each day?*
- *Some literate foolish do, but I don't!*
- *In your country, do they open libraries?*
- *Young ones have opened one, but we've devastated it!*
- *Are the poor ones helped by others, uncle?*
- *Doesn't God see them, why should we help?!*

*İnsanlığ adın dəhrdə ibqə edir, etsin,
Qəflətdə yatıb, ad batırıb, nam alırıız biz,
Başa yumuruq zolladıız, kam alırıız biz (Sabir, 2004, P.90)*

¹⁰ *Düz yeri bir yuyyumuru şey qanır,
Həm də deyir sutkada bir fırlanır,
Ay dolanır, göy dayanır, gün yanır,
Kafirə bax, gör nə bədımandı bu!
Dur qaçaq, oğlum, baş-ayaq qandı bu!.. (Sabir, 2004, P.218)*

- *Do you take care of widows in need?*
- *To hell with them, let them marry again!*
- *Do you talk about unity?*
- *Yes, some of us but for the sake of eloquence!*
- *The fanaticism of Shiites and Sunnites is over?*
- *What did you say? You swore! I'll rip your mouth!..*¹¹

Another example regarding incongruity in presentation can be given for proverbs. These proverbs were either said in a sarcastic way or deliberately changed to the opposite meanings:

Horses fight, governments become prosperous.

A house with two women is fertile.

*Leave the work you have begun unfinished*¹²

It is also possible to see the relief theory in "Molla Nasreddin". To this theory, "Any prohibition can cause a person to build up an increased desire to do what has been forbidden, and this frustrated desire may manifest itself in pent-up nervous energy" (Morreall, 1983, p.21). And it is obvious that the magazine one way or another touched, even attacked, many societal prohibitions depending on tradition. So it can be said that when writers or illustrators in the magazine broke the traditional taboos and criticized them, then the forbidden rules were called up and some of them was probably released in laughter. Here Morreall gives an example about children: "If a schoolboy hates his teacher, for example, he is not allowed to take out his hatred by assaulting the teacher. Indeed, in repressing his hostile feelings he may even put on a show of respect and docility in the classroom. If the teacher should suffer violence at someone else's hand, however, say the student hears that the teacher was mugged or if the teacher should simply trip and fall in front of the class, the pent-up energy of the student's hatred will find release in his laughter." (Morreall, 1983, p.22). For example, as previously mentioned that "Molla Nasreddin" satirized inequality of women and men or the violation against women in the community. And a woman who had some difficulties because of the pressure in the community wrote a letter to Omar Faig Nemanzadeh. She said: "Dear, Uncle Molla! In truth, you are interesting. You don't want to leave us women, the way a blind one never wants to leave what he holds tight... You are talking about the sharia law; it's not the sharia law that put us in this situation; but bigoted Muslims. Being a molla, please give those Muslim brothers some advice so that they will leave us be!.." (Nemanzadeh, 2006, p.267). Many other examples can be given about violation of women's right too. With his characteristic style, Sabir could manage to criticize what he found as woman abuse in a male-dominant society in those years:

*We have no difference between in our high and low ones,
We can always perform a work, in our old age,
Women sit side by side on our left and right,
We are slaves of passion; we receive help from desire!
We are religious; we take a woman once a day!*¹³

¹¹. Oxuyurmu qəzetə şəhrinin əhli tamam?

- Bəzi sarsaq oxumuşlar oxuyur, mən oxumam!

- Ölkəbizdə açılıbdır qıraatxanə?

- Tazələr açmış idi, qoyduq onu viranə!

- Ac qarındaşlara infaq edilmir, əmi can?

- Onu görməzmi xuda, el niyə versin ona nan?!

- Bivə övrətlərin əmri alınır nəcə?

- Canı çıxsin, o da getsin yenə bir tazə ərə!

- İttihad əmrinə dair danışsınız barı?

- Bir paramız danışır, leyk boğazdan yuxarı.

- Sünniyü şiə təəssübləri ləğv oldumu ya?

- Nə dedin? Küfr danışdın! Cıraram ağzını ha! -(Sabir, 2004, p.147)

¹² At at ile boğuşar, hükmətin işi rast girdər.

İki avradlı ev bərəkətli olar.

Başladığın işi yarıda qoy. (Molla Nasreddin, 1906, p.6)

¹³ Yox fərq bizim hündür ilə alçağımızda,

It can also be mentioned some kind of linguistic humor in the magazine. One of them is exaggeration. Morreall says that *"When someone makes a statement that we know is a gross exaggeration or an outright lie, we may be amused by the 'lack of fit' between the statement and reality."* So in the magazine, it is possible to find many examples of humoristic criticism that were actually exaggerated. For instance, in the first issue, under the title of "telegram", they wrote referring to the despotism of the Ottoman Empire: *"The Ottoman government forbade the people who just walk on the street to cough."* (Molla Nasreddin, 1906, p.3)

It is surely beyond doubt that "Molla Nasreddin" had many advantages of its humoristic style in its criticism. Because it is known that humor can enable people to facilitate social interaction, moderately and equably.

In "Molla Nasreddin", the writers and illustrators, created their own characteristic critical approach with their own "reverse style". Like Nasreddin Hodja, who sat backward on his donkey, but kept riding forward in the right direction, they tried to convey the straight message to people by using the opposite words. But of course it cannot be asserted that they always meant opposite meanings in their every humoristic words. It would be better to remain suspicious, if there is no supporting evidence, since it may not be always easy for readers to accurately estimate whether they used a sarcastic sense of humour or not.

Conclusion

It is known that an interactive innovation movement occurred between Turkish world and Azerbaijan, as a result of political and social conditions in 19th century. This movement in Azerbaijan was improved by the efforts of some intellectuals like M. F. Akhundov and H. Zerdabi, who were strong advocates of progressive movements and innovations. With the courage of the political events that occurred in Russia, this critical magazine started to be published in an intellectual environment that was created by the intelligentsia.

The writers and poets who wrote in a lot of literary genres sought a way to reach the people, by querying, exaggerating, fictionalizing, comparing, giving readers opportunities to express themselves. And even illustrators tried to reach the illiterate ones by drawing and illustrating.

The writers of the magazine especially dwelt upon the deficiencies of the Azerbaijani society and other Muslim communities. The writers, who fought against the bigotry which saw in social life, sometimes sought a way of convincing its readers by presenting some evidence. But the distinctive feature of this critical magazine was humour. Having looked at theories of laughter, as Morreall stated, it is difficult to arrive at any general agreement on the basics. Yet according to his classification, it is clearly seen that the incongruity and relief theories are dominant in the magazine. The writers of the magazine, who used an ironical style in their criticism, had a major impact on the Azerbaijani (Muslim) society.

In "Molla Nasreddin", the lifestyle based on fanaticism and irrational traditional taboos that compelled the others to a compulsory sociology were criticized. It seems that the writes in their criticism aimed at the manners of hypocritical people but not directly at religious doctrines. In another saying, they didn't attack the theory of religion but the practice of it in society. Because it should be kept in mind that the primary purpose of the magazine was not to examine religious belief. However since their strong criticism provoked some groups, "Molla Nasreddin" suffered from its sarcastic style. "Molla Nasreddin" can still be regarded as remarkable today with its critical style and tough stance.

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*Daim görürüz iş bu qocalmış çağımızda,
Cüt-cüt durur övrət solumuzda, sağımızda,
Şəhvət quluyuz, nəfsdən imdad alırıq biz!
Dindarləriz, gündə bir arvad alırıq biz! (Sabir, 2004, p.96)*

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